



World Christian Fellowship

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Story of 2 Sons – Part 02

Loving Father

Luke 15:17-20

Luke 15:17-20, *“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’*

²⁰ “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

What brings the Lord joy?

Recovery of the lost. The salvation of sinners.

The Pharisees and the scribes wanted nothing to do with sinners.

Jesus wanted everything to do with sinners.

These two parables draw the Pharisees in.

Jesus draws them in by making the first two parables questions.

Jesus draws them in as if they were the person in the story. Drawing them into the experience and the thinking of the main character so that they really play the role in their minds.

V 1-2, they were grumbling and complaining and criticizing Jesus for the kind of people that He received and spent time with.

They always did the same throughout his ministry.

Sinners came to Jesus because He came to seek and save sinners.

When sinners came,

- ✓ He received them,
- ✓ He embraced them,
- ✓ He loved them,
- ✓ He forgave them,
- ✓ He gave them eternal life.

This outraged the religious leaders.

Our Lord gave them two stories for them to answer.

Our Lord's best known and most memorable parable, called the parable of the prodigal son.

This story is intended to demonstrate the same thing, the joy of God over the recovery of a lost sinner. But this story goes even beyond that and it identifies the nature of repentance.

The first two stories they were not part of it but now in this they are part of it. The first two stories they agreed with Lord Jesus spoke of the Ethical of the stories.

Jesus in a way lured them into the story. Slowly without them knowing that they get involved into the story.

The first two stories, about the sheep and the coin, emphasize God as the seeker, the one who finds and the one who rejoices.

But this the third story looks not so much at the divine side, but at the human side.

- Sin,
- Repentance,
- Recovery, and
- Rejection.

This is a dramatic and emotionally moving story. All of it is deeply interesting and impactful on the thinking of anyone who is gripped by divine truth.

This story can be divided into three parts.

1. Younger Son, Prodigal son
2. Older son
3. Loving Father.

I would like to rephrase it as loving father and two sons instead of Prodigal son.

Both sons neither loved their father nor had relationship with him.

We saw from the verses 11 -16 how the younger son collected all the money and walked away from the hometown.

Spent all the money.

He was in need.

End up going to take care of the pigs.

Now V17, "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

Now at this point, the father re-enters the story.

The father re-enters in the mind of the son.

All of a sudden, his father comes to mind.

He had done everything he could to make sure he kept his father out of mind while he was indulging himself.

But now, left with nothing, destitute, in a famine, and dying of hunger.

He comes to himself.

He has a conversation with himself.

"How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger?"

Repentance really begins with an assessment of your condition.

This prodigal son come to an honest assessment of his own situation.

- He knows he is in a situation for which he has no resources to get out.
- He knows he is dying of hunger and no one will give him anything.

It's the end.

All repentance begins with an honest assessment of one's condition of destitution, helplessness, no resources, and impending death.

He thinks about his father and how many of his father's hired men have more than enough bread while he is dying of hunger.

Now in a house there are slaves, hired servants.

Slaves, '***Doulos***'.

Hired servants, '***misthios***.'

Slaves lived in the family. They weren't necessarily paid wages. They were part of the household. So, if you were a slave, you worked in a family and they gave you your food, lodging and took care of all your needs.

A hired man was a day labourer. Sometimes you see them around, standing on a corner waiting for somebody to come along and give them a job that day. Even today in our society, near Eastcote lane or in Southall, and all around the world.

They are at the lowest level.

They are basically the poor, who are willing to work.

Everyone who was poor in these days in biblical times had to work. Day workers hoped somebody would come along and hire them. They were unskilled although some of them may have developed some skilled craft that they would be hired to do. They were just unskilled workers who were available to help in the harvest or to do something that was temporary and therefore earn a little money to survive.

Now the younger son remembers that his father paid them more than enough. He remembered that the hired men had more than enough bread, which is to say their father was generous.

He remembered that his father gave them more than they generally needed to survive.

- His father was loving.
- His father was good.
- His father was kind.
- His father was generous.

Leviticus 19:13, *'You shall not cheat your neighbour, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.*

If you hire somebody to do work and he eats on the basis of that work and that money sustains him and his family, you have to pay him the day he does the work.

Hired men had nobody continually caring for them. They were out on their own at the lowest of the low. But they received wages and those wages, were given at the discretion of the man who hired them.

Jesus told the story about going into the marketplace in the gospel of Matthew chapter 20 to find some people to come and work in the harvest. They were hired first at 6, then at 9, then 12, then 3 and finally when he paid everyone same one denarius.

The father was a man who not only did what the Old Testament law said, but he did more.

This comes into the mind of the son to remember that his father is not a hard man. His father is not an indifferent man. His father is kind, generous and good.

He knows his father well enough to know that he's a merciful man, and a forgiving man. He has all that knowledge because that has been revealed to him in the revelation of his father which he had when he was in the home.

He doesn't know anybody else like that.

He doesn't know anywhere to turn to.

The younger son is ready to go back to this man that he knows to be merciful, generous, compassionate, and kind.

He is ready now not because of love for his father but for his stomach and survival, he doesn't have an alternative. There is nowhere left to go.

All he can do is humble himself and face his shame. Admit his terrible sin and disgrace, go back, and try to be treated with the same kind of mercy and compassion and kindness that he knows his father treats poor people. Maybe if he can work long enough, he can earn back what he lost and make restitution back to the family, and then have a reconciliation with his father.

He is thinking the way the people in Israel thought because that's the way Jesus wants him to think. They would have all understood this.

What he needs to do?

Go back to the father to receive mercy and forgiveness based on work that he does.

He needs to do restitution.

So, the Pharisee and scribes would have been with him in this story up to now.

They would have been horrified at what the young man did.

They would have seen him as an absolute outcast.

If there was any hope for coming back, he would have to come back, receive mercy and forgiveness, and do the work to earn back his reconciliation.

- He's broken.
- He's alone.
- He's sad.
- He's penitent.
- He has nowhere to go.
- He believes in his father.

This is a picture of one whose repentance leads to salvation because you see not only repentance here but faith in his father. He trusts in his father's goodness, compassion,

generosity, and mercy. Repentance is linked to faith. He knows the kind of man his father is!

In spite of the horrible way he has

- blasphemed,
- dishonoured,
- shamed,
- treated,
- lived a horrible life,

he knew his father is a forgiving, merciful, and loving.

He trusts to go back to receive forgiveness and do whatever works he needs to do to make restitution and be reconciled.

V 18-19, *I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."*

All the Pharisees and scribes would say that is what exactly what he needs to do!

- He came to his senses.
- He had nowhere to go but home.
- He understood about the goodness of the father.
- He is ready to place himself on the mercy of the father.
- He is going to do what he needs to do.

- He is going to make himself a hired man at the lowest point.
- He has no privilege to be even a slave in the house, let alone a son.
- He has no right to the home.
- He is just going to work as a hired man.
- He is ready.

This is how repentance works:

The sinner comes to himself.

Begins to assess where he is and where he is heading.

He understands the inevitable death, and eternal death.

The sinner says that he can't keep going this direction.

There's only one to whom I can turn, that's the Father!

I have flaunted and dishonoured the Father!

I must go back to Him.

I must go back bearing my shame and full responsibility for my sin.

I must cast myself on His mercy, forgiveness, and love.

I must tell Him that I am willing to work to do whatever I need to do to earn my way back.

Everybody would have understood that.

Very humbling, embarrassing, shameful, but he says I am going to do it.

"I have sinned against heaven and in your sight."

It can be read as I have sinned into heaven.

Ezra 9:6, *"Oh, my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to Thee, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens."*

This is the real repentance.

He is saying, "My life has been a total disaster. I am facing death and there is no one to blame but myself. I rebelled. I disobeyed. I wasted my life. I dishonoured my father. My sins rise to the very presence of God they stack so high."

This is true repentance, holding back nothing, no excuses, no blame anywhere but himself.

And so true penitence matched with true trust in a Father's love and forgiveness starts the sinner back.

Every sinner comes to this place:

- Empty, alienated, headed for eternal destruction, every sinner whoever repents starts with powerful conviction of his own or her own condition.
- Every sinner who comes back takes full responsibility for that sin and sees it as an offense that rises as high as heaven.
- Every sinner who comes back sets his course or her course toward God, to come back.

The Jews would have understood that when you come back, God will accept you if you do the work. He had no rights, forfeited them all when he took his part of the estate and liquidated it and squandered it, no rights, no worthiness.

He will never be a son again.
That is the view even he held.

"I am no longer worthy to be called your son, just make me a hired man."

Just give me a job and over all the years that it takes I am going to work to earn back everything I lost.

Remember that they must have held a ceremony of his funeral when he left. That is why he is referred to twice by the father as my son who was dead.

- I don't expect to live in the home.
- I don't expect to be a slave.
- I don't even expect a relationship with you, father.
- I just want to work.
- I will earn my way back.
- Make me as one of your hired men.

There is real faith here in God and there's real repentance.

Pharisees and Sadducees at this point would be applauding!
They would be saying yeah, this is right!

Up to now they are generally affirming the story.

They may not have liked the first part of the story that is because dishonouring the father was distasteful to them. They would have horrified when the young man left and conducted his life in that way. What is even worse was that he ended up with pigs who were utterly unclean.

But since then, they liked the idea that he came to his senses. They like the idea that he is coming back. They know there's no instant reconciliation.

That's not how it's done.

He is repentant and he trusts his father, but he is going to have to earn his way back.

That is the theology Pharisees held and every other religion in the world.

He comes back and says that,

- I will take my punishment.
- I will take the exclusion from fellowship in the family.
- I will take the distance from my father.
- I will endure the humiliation of lowly work.
- I will take the pain of hard labour for years to restore what I lost. I will work my way back until I can be reconciled.

Younger son is looking forward to even more pain in the future as he works for years to earn his way back. Everybody would get it because that was the way they thought it had to be done.

Great twist to the story:

V 20, *“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.*

If the Pharisees and scribes were standing on anything, they fell off. This is way beyond their sensibilities.

It starts out simply by saying he got up and came to his father. The son, the sinner, ready to face the shame he deserves.

- He wants restoration, he wants a new start.
- He needs his father.
- He needs his father's resources.
- His father can give him life instead of death.
- He has hope in the goodness, kindness, and forgiveness of his father.
- He is truly repentant.
- He doesn't even want to be a slave.
- He will work as a hired man to be paid to earn his way back.
- He doesn't want anything he doesn't deserve.
- He will work to earn it.

That is how people feel. That is how the Jews felt. The Pharisees and scribes listening to Jesus, along with anybody else at that time who heard this story as well.

When he does come to his father, they would know what the father would do.

First of all, the father would not be available.

He had been dishonoured. His respect had been tarnished in the community. He had been shamed by such an outrageous and rebellious son, and he had brought shame upon himself in some ways by even allowing him to do that.

The Jews would expect this.

The father would make him sit outside the gate of the home somewhere in that village for days in public view.

Nobody would take him in so that the whole town could heap scorn on him, so that the whole town could bring the retribution upon his head that he deserved for the way he dishonoured his father.

Scorn and abuse and slander against him and people mocking him and perhaps even spitting on him.

The son would expect it.

The Pharisees and scribes would expect that he had to be justifiably shamed before everybody as part of the retribution for the shame he had brought upon his father.

That is not what happened.

The Father did 5 things.

- 1. He saw him way far off.**
- 2. He had compassion on him**
- 3. He ran towards him**
- 4. Hugged him.**
- 5. Kissed him continually.**

1. He saw far off

While he was still a long way off, hadn't reached the entrance to the village, down some dusty roadway out of town, a long way off.

His father sees him this shows that the father has been seeking for his son.

Everybody would know that, the father looking.

They would assume he had been looking a lot, very often, that he knew the kind of life that his son was headed toward would end up the way it ends.

Father hoped that he could come back.

The father, bearing a private pain and a suffering love all alone in his own heart, looking...

It must be daylight in the story because he sees him a long way off, which means the town is crowded, the town is busy.

Why?

He wants to reach his son before his son reaches the village. He not only wants to initiate the reconciliation as the shepherd did when he found the sheep and the woman when she found the coin, but he wants not just to initiate the reconciliation.

He wants to get to his son before his son gets to the village.

Why?

He wants to protect him from the shame.

He wants to protect him from the scorn and the abuse and the slander.

He wants to bear the shame, take the abuse.

He is willing to have the people to say that this man who has been dishonoured now dishonours himself by embracing this wretched boy.

But he wants to protect the son from the scorn, the slander, the taunting, which was expected!

How does he protect the boy?

He sees him when he is still a long way off from the village.

Same way with the sinner and everyone of us God is looking and watching!

Genesis 16:13-14, *Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?"*¹⁴ *Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.*

Psalms 139:16, *Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.*

Psalms 53:2, *God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.*

2 Chronicles 16:9, *For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."*

Proverbs 15:3, *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.*

Job 34:21, *"For His eyes are on the ways of man, And He sees all his steps.*

2. Compassion

Not just compassion for his past sin, not just compassion for his present filth, and he was in rags and smelled like a pig, but compassion for what he was about to experience.

Why did the father go out to meet him?

Compassion!

The word compassion is '*splanchnizomai*,' comes from a root that means your intestines, or your bowel or your abdomen.

He felt a sick feeling in his stomach when he saw the boy and knew he was headed toward this unleashing of scorn.

We have studied in great detail about the compassion of God in our lesson on Luke 13:34-35, I am sure you would not have forgotten about it.

One character of God stands out always in the Bible is God is compassionate.

Psalms 145:8, *The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy.*

Psalms 145:17-19, *The Lord is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works. ¹⁸The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. ¹⁹He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.*

Jesus in His earthly ministry moved with compassion.

Matthew 9:36, *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.*

Matthew 14:14, *And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.*

Matthew 15:32, *Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."*

3. Ran towards him

Middle Eastern noblemen don't run.

One of the main reasons why Middle Easterners of rank do not run is that traditionally they all have worn long robes. This is true of both men and women. No one can run in a long robe without taking it up into his or her hands. When this occurs the legs are exposed, which is considered humiliating.

Exposure of the legs was considered shameful. The robes themselves reached to the ground to make sure this didn't happen.

Old-fashioned ruling for the Sabbath states that if a bird crawls under your robes on the Sabbath, you may not catch it.

Now there's a problem, because you might have to expose your leg to do that. The suggested alternative is to sit very quietly and wait for sundown so no one can see and then seize the bird. Further, on the Sabbath you could smooth out your robe to make it look nice, but you couldn't lift it up.

If your robe did not reach the ground, and you didn't have a longer one for the Sabbath, you had to take the hem of it out so that it touched the ground.

Also, no one should jump or take long strides. One foot should always be on the ground. The reason for this last ruling is to assure that no part of the leg is ever exposed.

While walking between thorns and thistles, Rabi would lift up his garments to keep them from being torn and he had to offer his followers a defence of this unacceptable exposure of his legs.

Another Rabi lifted his robes to avoid thorns while walking in the country. He is asked to explain these mysterious acts which

are bewildering. Outer robes themselves are called ***mekebeduth***, meaning ‘that which brings me honour.’ Honour was connected to the robe.

Priests making the sacrifices were not allowed to lift their long robes to keep them out of the blood on the pavement, for fear their legs would be exposed.

The word “running” here, is ‘***dramōn***’.

It is the Greek word that is a technical word for racing in a stadium.

He sprinted!

He sprinted as if he's impatient.

He can't get there fast enough.

This is beneath his dignity!

What is God running for?

Why does He bring shame and scorn on Himself for exposing Himself?

Shocking!

Reason?

The Father runs, taking the shame, to protect the son from taking the shame.

He takes the scorn and the mockery and the slander so that his son doesn't have to bear it.

This is the only place we see God running towards His lost son coming back!

We see Jesus standing when Stephen was martyred.

Acts 7:55-56, *But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ⁵⁶and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"*

4. Hugged him

More shocking!

He embraced him, literally fell on his neck.

Massive hug buried his head on the neck of his son, stinking and dirty as he was.

The father has been suffering silently for the whole time he's been gone. Silent suffering love has become publicly displayed as he runs through the street, bringing shame on himself, to embrace his son and spare him from shame.

Everybody now knows how much that father loves that son. So much that he takes his shame, that he empties himself of any pride, and honour.

Display of love brings shame on himself in order to throw his arms around that returning sinner and protect him from being shamed by anyone else. By the time the boy walked into the village, he was a fully reconciled son.

Jeremiah 31:3, *The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.*

Deuteronomy 33:27, *The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms;*

Psalms 63:8, *My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.*

Judges 6:34, *And the Spirit of the LORD clothed himself in Gideon, who when he had blown the shofar, Abiezer joined with him.*

5. Kissed him

"he kissed him,"

'kataphileō' Means repeatedly, or continuously.

Amazing.

Do you want to know how eager God is to receive a sinner?

He will run through the dirt and bear the shame.

He will embrace the sinner with all His strength and plant kisses all over the sinner's head.

Some people think that God is a reluctant Saviour.
No! Never!!

This is the kiss of affection repeated!
He was ready to kiss his Father's feet, but His Father is kissing his head.

This is a gesture of acceptance, friendship, love, forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation.

The father humbles himself out of this deep love for this son, comes all the way down from his house to the dirt of the village, runs through, bearing the scorn and the shame, throws his arms around the penitent, believing sinner who is coming to him in his filthy, unclean rags.

That father is doing exactly what Jesus did!
Jesus came to the village and bear the shame, slander, and mockery to throw His arms around us and kiss us and reconcile with us.

The shock is all this happened without any works!
This was all grace!

We will see that next week!

We think God as severe and harsh punisher.
Here we find out that God over the top with joy!
God overjoyed when a sinner repents!

God is still looking out for sinner to come!
God is willing to take the shame into His name!
God is willing to protect the repentant sinner.
God is so keen to lavish His love towards the repentant.
God is waiting and longing to embrace the repentant.
God is planning to have a party!
Will you come to Him?